

Amendments to the Claims

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-4 (canceled).

Claim 5 (new). A circuit configuration for controlling an inductive load, comprising:

a supply voltage source having a first potential terminal and a second potential terminal;

a first input connected to said first potential terminal;

a second input connected to said second potential terminal;

an output for connecting to the inductive load, the inductive load being further connected to said second potential terminal of said supply voltage source;

a first switch connected between said first input and said output, said first switch receiving and controlled by a first control signal for switching the inductive load on and off;

a freewheeling circuit connected between said second input and said output, said freewheeling circuit having a second switch; and

a monitoring unit monitoring a potential in said freewheeling circuit and closes and/or opens said second

switch via a second control signal in dependence on the potential, said monitoring unit having a delay element for opening said second switch after a predefined period when a predefined voltage threshold has been undershot or exceeded, with a result that after the predefined period energy stored in the inductive load will have discharged via said freewheeling circuit.

Claim 6 (new). The circuit configuration according to claim 5, wherein said monitoring unit has a linking unit with two inputs and one output outputting the first control signal, the first control signal being dependent on a level and a time curve of signals at said two inputs of said linking unit.

Claim 7 (new). The circuit configuration according to claim 5, wherein the circuit configuration is a protective circuit providing safe operation of the inductive load.

Claim 8 (new). A method for controlling an electrical load, which comprises the steps of:

checking an actuation status of a first switch;

comparing a first voltage with a predefined voltage threshold resulting in a comparison result;

determining a fault situation in dependence on the comparison result and the actuation status of the first

switch; and

operating a second switch in dependence on the comparison result and/or the actuation status of the first switch, an operation of the second switch being delayed by a predefined period, resulting in that after the predefined period lapses energy stored in the electrical load will have discharged via a freewheeling circuit.

Claim 9 (new). The method according to claim 8, which further comprises closing the first switch with a switch-on-again signal after a fault situation.